

Washington State Public Health Association

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Resolution 02-03

Calling Upon School Officials to Partner with Public Health Officials to Improve Student Diets, Dietary Messages and Levels of Physical Activity

Recognizing that the prevalence of childhood obesity has tripled in the last 30 years, and that one in four obese children is at high risk for Type 2 diabetes; and

Recognizing that poor nutrition and inadequate physical activity are among the leading preventable causes of premature illness and death in Washington, contributing to heart disease, stroke, various cancers and more; and

Recognizing that the consumption of soft drinks and high-fat foods together with inadequate levels of physical activity contribute to excess energy and caloric intake; and

Recognizing that soft drink consumption among children is displacing the consumption of more nutritious beverages such as milk or fruit juice that provide important nutrients such as calcium and vitamin C; and

Recognizing that the calcium intake of a high proportion of children and adolescents is suboptimal at the time when peak bone mass is achieved, and that maximizing peak bone mass during childhood, adolescence and young adulthood is important to the primary prevention of osteoporosis; and

Recognizing that frequent soft drink consumption contributes to dental caries and poorer oral health outcomes in children; and

Recognizing that children and adults are influenced in food and beverage choices by foods and beverages that are in their environment, and/or are promoted by credible people and institutions like teachers and schools; and

Recognizing that despite the lessening of formal school system accountability standards related to diet, dietary messages and physical activity, many school districts have adopted national model programs for physical activity and nutrition; and

Recognizing that some school boards in Washington and other states have begun to pay particular attention to improving positive messages and reducing negative messages to students about good nutrition and adequate physical activity; however

Recognizing that some companies have paid school districts or given schools favors in order to market to children at school to gain long term loyalty for certain brands of soft drinks and high fat foods and thereby undermine healthful messages; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Washington State Public Health Association (WSPHA) affirms the role of schools as environments entrusted to promote and protect children's health and safety; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that WSPHA affirms the value of integrating health education messages with food service, and the school environment communicating positive messages about healthy food and beverage choices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that WSPHA urgently requests that each school board in Washington cause to be conducted a comprehensive review of their schools' policies, practices and curricula related to nutrition and physical activity, including any financial or charitable arrangements that result in the marketing of unhealthful food or beverages to children in or proximate to the school environment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that WSPHA calls upon state and local Boards of Health to partner with school districts in this effort, assisting with these comprehensive reviews by making the best available science on nutrition and physical activity known to school boards, superintendents and principals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that WSPHA urges all school Districts in Washington to find better funding sources than financial or charitable arrangements that result in the marketing of unhealthful food or beverages to children in or proximate to the school environment.

Signed by: Jackson Williams, WSPHA President
December 11, 2002